

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. For use in a customer computer network having at least
- 2 one node capable of executing digital content from a digital content source
- 3 on at least one of the customer computer network and on an application
- 4 service provider, a licensing method comprising the steps of:
- 5 a. providing licensed units to a customer;
- 6 b. providing independently selectable digital content;
- 7 c. assigning a predetermined number of customer
- 8 computer network assigned units to each independently selected digital
- 9 content when the digital content is run on the customer computer network;
- 10 d. assigning a predetermined number of application
- 11 service provider assigned units to each independently selected digital
- 12 content when the digital content is run on the application service provider;
- 13 e. charging a number of checked out units to the customer
- 14 computer network based on the digital content currently being run by the
- 15 customer on the customer computer network and on the application service
- 16 provider;
- 17 f. determining a number of available units equal to the
- 18 difference between the total licensed units to the customer computer network
- 19 and the total checked out units charged to the customer computer network
- 20 for digital content currently being executed on the customer computer
- 21 network and on the application service provider for the customer; and
- 22 g. determining whether a requested digital content is to be
- 23 executed or denied execution on at least one of the customer computer
- 24 network and the application service provider based on the difference
- 25 between the available units on the customer computer network requesting
- 26 execution of the digital content and the total checked out units charged to
- 27 the customer computer network.

1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
2 when the available units on the customer computer network
3 requesting execution of a digital content are greater than or equal to an
4 application service provider required units of the digital content requested by
5 the customer computer network, determining when the application service
6 provider required units of the requested digital content to be executed on the
7 application service provider are to be charged to the available units.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the application service
2 provider assigned units of at least one of the digital content run on the
3 application service provider differ from the customer computer network
4 assigned units of the identical digital content run on the customer computer
5 network.

1 4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
2 upon termination of a run of digital content on the application
3 service provider, calculating and adding the application service provider
4 returned units of the terminated digital content to the available units on the
5 customer computer network.

1 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
2 requesting execution of one digital content on the application
3 service provider; and
4 determining if the application service provider can immediately
5 execute the requested digital content.

1 6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of:
2 if the application service provider cannot immediately execute
3 the requested product, pre-charging the application service provider
4 assigned units of the requested digital content to the requesting customer
5 computer network; and

6 queuing the requested digital content for subsequent execution
7 on the application service provider.

1 7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
2 determining whether to charge the application service provider
3 required units at one of the time of the request of execution of the digital
4 content and at the time of execution of the requested digital content on the
5 application service provider.

1 8. The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of:
2 if the application service provider required units are to be
3 charged at the time of the request, checking the available units to determine
4 if the available units are greater than or equal to the application service
5 provider required units of the requested digital content, and, if yes, locking
6 the application service provider required units and charging the application
7 service provider required units to the available units at the requesting
8 customer.

1 9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of:
2 determining if the application service provider is able to
3 immediately execute the requested digital content.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein:
2 if the application service provider is not able to immediately
3 execute the requested digital content, waiting for a change in the status of
4 the available units.

1 11. The method of claim 9 wherein:
2 if the application service provider is able to immediately
3 execute the requested digital content;
4 determining if the available units are greater than the

5 application service provider required units of the requested digital content or
6 if the application service provider required units of the requested digital
7 content have been locked, and, if yes, executing the requested digital
8 content.

1 12. The method of claim 7 wherein if the application service
2 provider required units are to be charged to the available units at the time of
3 execution of the requested digital content, further comprising the step of:
4 at the time of execution, checking if the available units are
5 greater than or equal to the application service provider required units and, if
6 yes, setting the available units equal to the prior available units minus the
7 application service provider required units and, if no, leaving the available
8 units unchanged.